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ABSTRACT

A program was conducted 1) to identify sources of teacher error in administering individual behavior modification programs to behaviorally retarded children, and 2) to develop effective individual and group training programs for a variety of professional and paraprofessional teaching personnel. Analysis of videotapes of teacher performance reveals that both objectives were achieved. Participants were drawn from the staff of a behavior modification training day care center; included were three college student behavioral specialists, eight foster grandparents who were classroom aides, and three mothers who worked as volunteer helpers and were trained to conduct behavioral modification programs with their own children. In phase 1 staff members were videotaped daily as they followed instructions in administering programs designed to teach children simple skills. Tapes were replayed with each teacher immediately following her daily session and appropriate behaviors praised. In Phase 2 (8 weeks of daily 2-hour sessions) foster grandparents were given informal lectures and videotape demonstrations on behavior modification. Later videotapes of their own teaching were replayed for group discussion. In phase 3 mothers read a programed text on social learning; then role playing and videotape demonstrations were used to teach them necessary skills. After instruction in her own child's program, videotapes of the mother's own performance were analyzed after each tutoring session. (JS)

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Director's Report: A Training Program to Increase the Effectiveness of Personnel Teaching Retarded and Other Behaviorally Disadvantaged Children

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SP004267

I. Introduction

This program's goals were (1) to identify sources of teacher* error in administering individual behavior modification programs to behaviorally retarded children, and (2) to develop effective individual and group training programs for a variety of professional and paraprofessional teaching personnel. Analysis of videotapes of teacher performance reveals that both objectives were achieved.

II. Operation of the Program

The program was administered by the University of Utah and was conducted in the Behavior Modification Training Center, a day care center in Salt Lake City. The Center's budget was derived from the Salt Lake City Public School District, from a private, nonprofit corporation, and from tuition and contributions. The children served were moderately to severely behaviorally disturbed and were variously diagnosed as mentally retarded, psychotic, antistic, and brain damaged. Many were multiply handicapped. They ranged in age from three to twelve years and represented a cross section of socio-economic levels.

1. Planning

It was initially planned to spend a large portion of the project year in the identification of factors differentiating good and poor teachers. This task proved much simpler than we had anticipated. The good teachers adhered strictly to the prescribed behavior modification program, promptly reinforcing appropriate behavior and ignoring inappropriate responses. Poor teachers did not. Consequently the major goal of the programs became the development of training techniques to upgrade the performance of the poorer teachers.

2. Participants

Participants were drawn from the Center's staff, and included a Behavior Specialist who was a trained speech therapist, college student Behavior Specialists, and Foster Grandparents who served as classroom aides. In addition, a group of mothers who worked as volunteer helpers at the Center were trained to conduct behavior modification programs with their own children. We judged that we largely achieved our aim of selecting participants representing a wide variety of ages, training, social groups, and educational levels.

3. Staff

The training staff for this program consisted of the Director, a Ph.D. in experimental clinical psychology, and the Associate Director, an M.A. (now a Ph.D.) in educational psychology who

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*For purposes of this report, all teaching personnel including student teachers, classroom aides, and fully trained professionals, will be referred to as teachers.

was also the Director of the Behavior Modification Training Center. Daily conduct and supervision of the training programs were provided by the two Project Assistants, both of whom were advanced psychology graduate students, one specializing in experimental clinical and the other in general experimental psychology. Both held master's degrees and have recently earned Ph.D's.

4. Orientation Program

Training Center staff members and volunteers who were the participants were nominated by the Center Director and then were interviewed either individually or in small groups to enlist their cooperation in the training program. The programs aims of increasing their own teaching skills and of developing improved training techniques were explained to participants during the orientation interviews. They were also informed that they would be observed and videotaped daily, but that their jobs would be in no way jeopardized by any potential deficits we might observe in their performance.

5. Program Operation and Evaluation

In the first phase of the program, three Center staff members were videotaped daily in their conduct of individual training sessions with children. First, the teachers were only observed daily as they followed instructions in administering programs designed to teach the children simple skills such as gross motor imitations, basic speech sounds, and precise enunciation of single words. Following these baseline observations, we continued to videotape these teachers daily, but also replayed the videotapes with each teacher immediately following her daily session. In the feedback interviews, we praised the teacher's appropriate behaviors. While teachers were not censured for inappropriate behaviors, such as scolding the children, they were given suggestions to try more effective, alternative techniques. Our praise and other comments on their performance were gradually withdrawn as the teachers' skill increased. Finally, we ceased giving them feedback of any kind, but continued to observe and videotape their daily teaching sessions. Figure 1 shows the typical results of the training program with one of the participants. (The most highly effective teaching technique would be to administer both social reinforcement (praise, hugs, smiles) and primary reinforcement (food, candy) at a near 100 per cent level for the child's appropriate responses, but never to reinforce his inappropriate behavior.) Panel I depicts teacher behavior during the pre-training baseline sessions. During this time the teacher's contingent administration of reinforcers was very low, as was the child's proportion of correct responses. Although she had received some instruction in behavior modification techniques prior to this program, the teacher was using no primary reinforcers during baseline, and socially reinforced a very high proportion of the child's inappropriate responses. Upon initiation of the feedback-training condition (panel II), the teacher's use of appropriate primary and social reinforcement increased markedly, as did the child's appropriate responding.

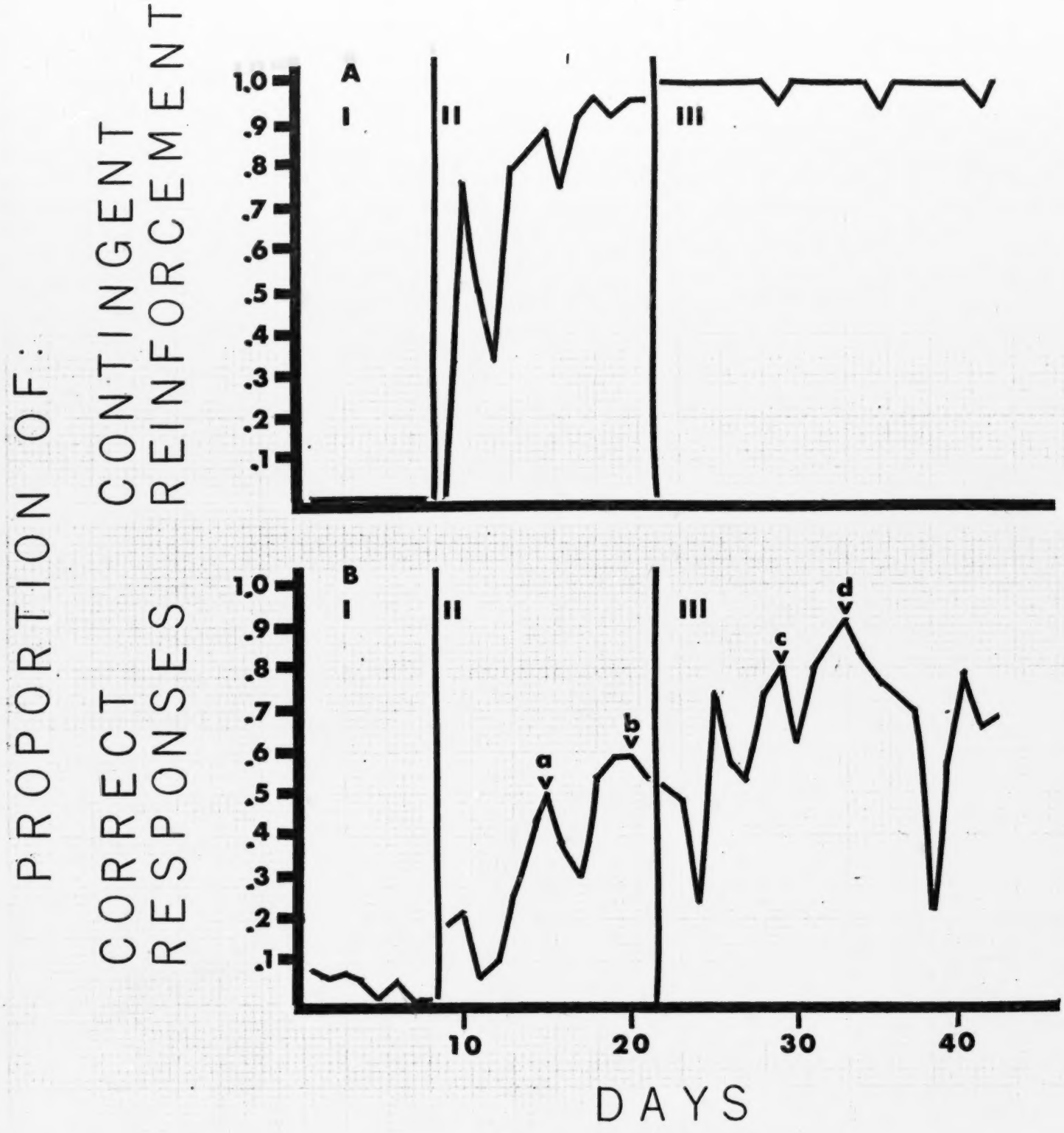

Figure 1. Proportion of contingent reinforcement administered by Therapist A (Panel A) and proportion of correct responses made by child A (Panel B) during baseline (I), feedback-training (II), and post-feedback (III) phases of the program. Points a, b, c, and d show when new behaviors are demanded of the child.

Arrows indicate when new child behaviors were initiated in the program. Panel III shows that during the postfeedback condition both the teacher's and the child's behavior continued to be appropriate, a phenomenon found for all of the teachers studied during postfeedback conditions.

Group Training of Foster Grandparents. During the second phase of the project, a group of eight Foster Grandparent classroom aides were trained to conduct individual behavior modification programs with individual children. The Foster Grandparents were all over age 60 years and of limited income. They had previously received only minimal training in behavior modification techniques and none had ever conducted an individual session with a child. The Grandparents were first given informal lectures and demonstrations on behavior modification. Questions and discussions were encouraged. Then they role played individual teaching sessions and watched a videotape demonstration of correct and incorrect teaching techniques. Finally each Grandparent was videotaped as she conducted daily individual sessions with a child. The other group members observed each Grandparent's sessions in turn, recorded the behavior of the Grandparent and the child, and discussed the conduct of the session during the replay of the videotape following each session. The total Grandparent training program was completed in eight weeks of morning sessions lasting less than two hours daily. At the completion of the program, most of the participants could satisfactorily conduct supervised individual training sessions with the children.

Training Parents as Teaching Aides. In the final phase of the project, three mothers who volunteered their time were trained to conduct individual behavior modification programs with their own children. The mothers were first asked to read a programmed text on social learning (Living with Children, by G. R. Patterson and M. E. Gullion); then role playing and videotaped demonstrations were used to teach them necessary skills. Finally, each mother was instructed in the procedures involved in the specific program designed for her child, and videotaped observations were made. Feedback on her performance was given each mother immediately after each tutoring session. Figure 2 shows the results obtained with a typical mother. Under this training program, the mothers quickly acquired the skills necessary to conduct tutoring sessions with their own children. These results are indeed promising and indicate that parents may be an important, presently inadequately utilized teaching resource for behaviorally deviant children.

III. Conclusions

The behavioral data indicate that the training programs we devised can successfully equip a wide range of paraprofessionals to ameliorate problem behaviors of severely deviant children. Furthermore, the training programs can be relatively brief if they are conducted on a near-daily basis. These findings are encouraging the host institution and other, similar local agencies to employ and train paraprofessional teaching personnel, an employment situation benefitting institutions and paraprofessionals alike.

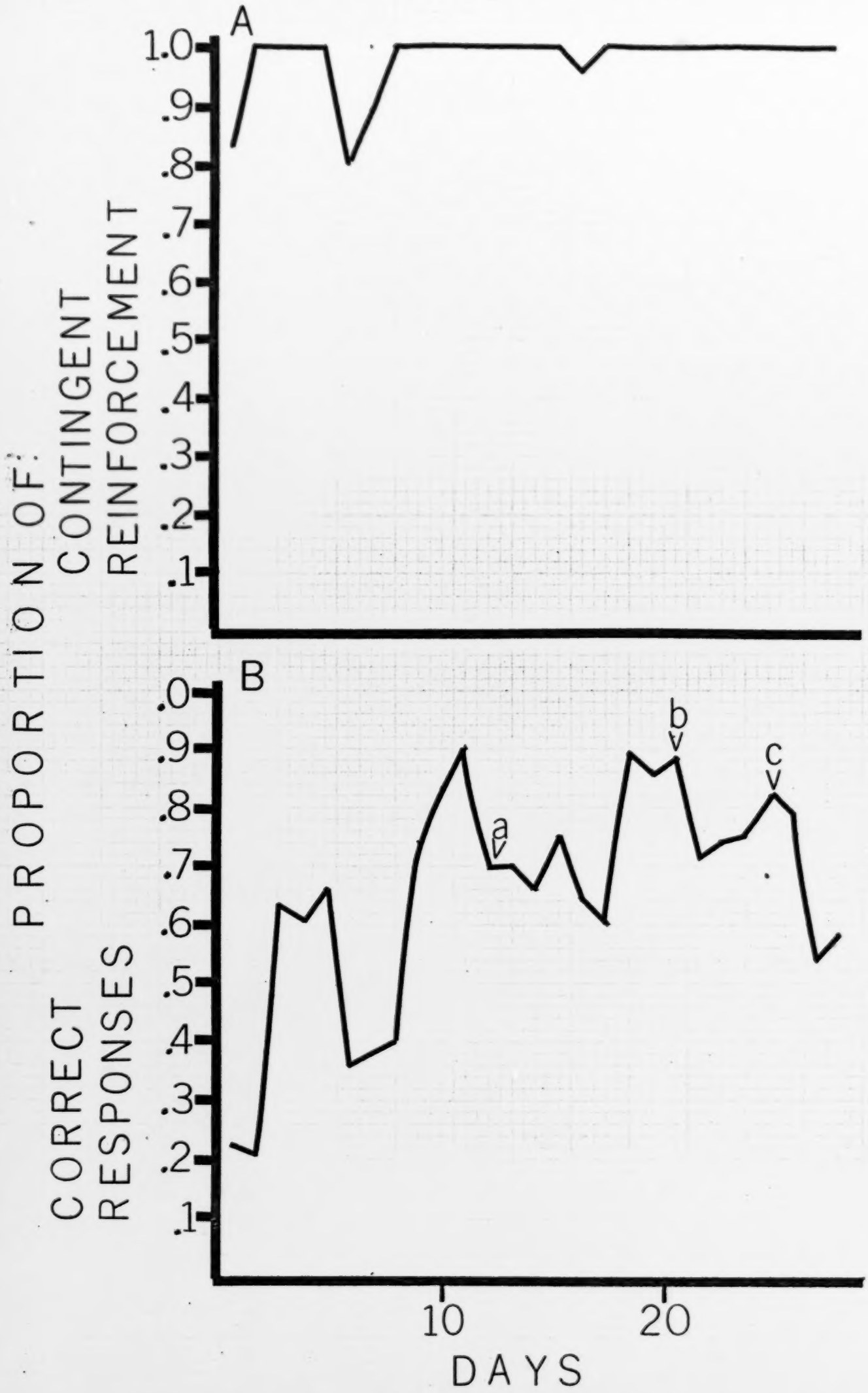

Figure 2. Proportion of contingent reinforcement administered by Mother B (Panel A) and proportion of correct responses made by Child B (Panel B) during feedback training sessions. Points a, b, and c show when new behaviors are demanded of the child.

We regret most the lack of opportunity to follow up the performance of the participants over longer intervals of time, a program defecit imposed by the budgeting of our operation for only one year. We encourage the Office of Education to consider budgeting such programs for at least two-year periods in order to get a maximum yield of useful information from each project. Nevertheless, during the one year we have developed an effective training program format that can be used in a wide variety of teaching settings with a broad range of teaching personnel.

IV. Appendix

A. Foster Grandparents*

Lorene Allsbury	1117 Indiana Avenue
Ella Clapham	4768 South 1780 East
Beth Gledhill	4137 South Orchard Drive, Bountiful
Julia Hickman	1425 South Second East
Eva Ingalls	2022 Roberta
Sara Monroe	248 East 9th South
Rubye Olson	477 South 200 East, Sandy
Myrtle Phillips	35 Hartwell Avenue
Veva Reay	549 South Hollywood Avenue
Dorothy Buenger	2022 Roberta Street

B. Staff

Linda Durrant	Fan Cott Hall #C-313
Hermann Peine	286 "C" Street
Barbara Tweedy	1153 Milton Avenue

C. Parents

Clara Holman	2984 South 23rd East
Mary Lichfield	4579 Wander Lane
Judy Davis	684 South 560 East, Orem
Audrey Miller	5400 Hillside Drive, Murray

*All addresses in Salt Lake City, unless otherwise indicated.